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C O N F I D E N T I A L BUENOS AIRES 003041

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SUBJECT: VENEZUELA: SPEAKING OUT ON HUMAN RIGHTS

REF: STATE 223273

Classified By: Ambassador Lino Gutierrez for reasons 1.4(b) and (d)

1. (C) DCM, accompanied by POLCOUNS, delivered reftel demarche on Venezuela, s deteriorating democracy and human rights situation on October 22 to Argentine MFA Under Secretary for Latin American Policy, Ambassador Dario

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Alessandro. Alessandro was accompanied by his deputy, the Director General for Latin American Policy, Minister Jose Maxwell. DCM also left the reftel talking points with Alessandro as a non-paper. Alessandro said that the GOA took note and would study our request. He commented that the first two points (i.e. the potential arrest warrants for SUMATE leaders and the proposed prohibition of foreign funding for certain NGO supporting human rights and democracy-building programs) were of &real concern8 to the GOA. Alessandro was less emphatic on the draft press law noting that some sectors of the Venezuelan media had contributed to the problem by often behaving irresponsibly. He said that the solution on the press issue would be for both sides to come to an agreement that would limit some of the personal attacks made by the media but would avoid legislation that would limit press rights.

2. (C) Alessandro said that Argentina had been helpful on Venezuela. (Note: Alessandro was referring to Kirchner's past pressure on Chavez to hold the recall referendum and his two meetings with representatives of the Coordinadora Democratica earlier this year. End Note). The DCM responded that if the GOA came to the decision that it was unwilling to issue a public statement, we hoped the GOA might consider speaking privately with the Venezuelans regarding these issues, stressing the potential impact of these measures throughout the hemisphere. Alessandro agreed to consider this request as well and told the DCM that he would keep in touch on these issues.

GUTIERREZ